

Safety Seconds

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Your Golden Egg Laying Geese

“As he grew rich he grew greedy, and thinking to get at once all the gold the Goose could give, he killed it and opened it only to find nothing.” What a powerful phrase from the famous Aesop’s Fable, “The Goose with the Golden Eggs.” It is a story my parents told me to warn of the problems caused by impatience for wealth.

Mushroom companies have employees, facilities, vehicles and equipment that allow them to produce their crop. These essential components are a farm’s golden egg laying geese. Just imagine the trouble you would have if you ignored the required preventative maintenance on your steam boilers or you didn’t service your loaders at the proper intervals. If not maintained, repaired and improved in a timely manner, production, efficiency and quality suffer. If these items are totally ignored just to increase short-term productivity, you may find that the goose you “opened” has no golden eggs inside.

Your employees are one of your most important geese. Maintaining them is as important if not more so than maintaining your facilities and equipment. Training your employees is a way to ensure that you are caring for your geese and keeping them safe and out of harms way.

Training takes time and money, no question about it. Just as ignoring the needs of your facilities and equipment can increase productivity in the short term, so can ignoring the training needs of your employees. However, the costs of doing this with your employees can be devastating, in some cases more so than ignoring your facilities and equipment. OSHA fines, losses in productivity, and worst of all, the direct and indirect costs related to injuries are examples of the negative consequences related to employee training that can destroy a bottom line.

Find time in your schedule and money in your budget to *invest* in employee training. I emphasize the word invest because your productivity will be improved in the long run. Train your maintenance personnel in lockout and tagout procedures, educate your harvesters on the importance of using proper body mechanics while working, and teach your loader operators how properly to stack bales and pile raw ingredients. You can even go a few steps further, train your employees to identify and report hazards in the workplace and teach them that Workers Compensation claims impact the company’s bottom line.